

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 SAB-01 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 ACDA-19 AF-10 EUR-25

DRC-01 AID-20 /184 W

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R 081102Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1182

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A TAGS: PFOR, SY

SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER PERES ON SYRIAN MILITARY PREPARATIONS

REF: TEL AVIV 4481

1. WE NOTE IN PARA 6 REFTEL THAT DEFENSE MINISTER PERES CITED AMONG HIS PROOFS THAT SYRIA IS PREPARING FOR WAR SYRIA'S FAILURE TO RETURN THE CIVILIAN POPULATION TO KUNEITRA. WHILE WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING IF THE MILITARY HAS PLAYED A ROLE IN THE FALIURE OF THE POPULATION TO RETURN, WE DO KNOW THAT BASED ON CONTACTS WITH CIVILIAN OFFICIALS INCLUDING SEVERAL MINISTERS THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAD HOPED TO BE ABLE TO RETURN THE KUNEITRA POPULATION SHORTLY AFTER REESTABLISHING SYRIAN CONTROL OVER THE CITY. IN FACT, THE FIRST DAY ON WHICH KUNEITRA WAS OPEN TO CIVILIANS MANY KUNEITRA RESIDENTS WERE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THE CITY WITH THEIR BELONGINGS ON CARS AND BUSSES IN ABVIOUS ANTICIPATION

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THAY THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO STAY. THE ALMOST COMPLETE DESTRUC-

TION OF THE CITY, HOWEVER, PREVENTED THESE PEOPLE FROM STAYING AND HAS CONTINUED TO PREVENT MANY PEOPLE FROM GOING BACK.

2. OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DAMASCUS FAIR, I HAVE PAID CALLS ON THE MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND BOTH MEN TALKED ABOUT KUNEITRA IN TERMS OF GETTING THE AREA BACK TO NORMAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE AFFAIRS, IN FACT, WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN AND HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO PURSUE A PROPOSAL BEING SUBMITTED BY MCKEE INTERNATIONAL, AN AMERICAN FIRM WORKING OUT OF NEW YORK CITY, WHICH INTER ALIA RECOMMENDS REBUILDING KUNEITRA WITH PREFAB HOUSING.

3. AS I SAID THERE MAYBE MILITARY FACTORS INVOLVED WHICH EXPLAIN WHY THE CIVILIAN POPULATION HAS NOT RETURNED TO KUNEITRA BUT I THINK THE ACTUAL SITUATION IN THE CITY MAY ALSO BE PLAYING AN IMPORTANT IF NOT MAJOR ROLE IN PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM GOING BACK.
SCOTES

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